

ROADS IN MICHIGAN.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

TRANSMITTING

*The information required by a resolution of the House of Representatives of the 26th ultimo, in relation to certain roads in the Territory of Michigan.*

FEBRUARY 6, 1835.

Read, and laid upon the table.

WAR DEPARTMENT,

February 5, 1835.

SIR: In answer to the resolution of the House of Representatives of the 26th ultimo, respecting certain roads in the Territory of Michigan, I have the honor to transmit herewith a report from the Quartermaster General, which contains the information called for.

Very respectfully,

Your most obedient servant,

LEW. CASS.

Hon. JOHN BELL,

*Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL'S OFFICE,

*Washington City, February 4, 1835.*

SIR: In obedience to your order requiring an estimate, under a resolution of the House of Representatives of the 26th ultimo, "of the expense necessary to complete the opening of the military road from Green Bay to Prairie du Chien, in the Territory of Michigan, so as to allow the transportation of troops and military stores thereon when necessary; also, the expense required to open a road from Saginaw to Mackinac, in the said Territory, for similar purposes," I have the honor to submit, in reply to the first clause of the resolution, a copy of the report of the commissioners who surveyed the route from Green Bay to Prairie du Chien, and to state

that they did not furnish a detailed estimate, but, in the concluding paragraph of their report, express the opinion that the amount estimated by this department in 1833, (ten thousand dollars,) in addition to the balance of an appropriation remaining unexpended, would be sufficient to finish the work on the plan proposed.

In reply to the last clause of the resolution, I have the honor to state that a survey of the route of a road from Saginaw to Mackinac was commenced during the last season, but was not completed. Until the survey be finished, and the nature of the country known, it will not be possible to estimate, with any degree of certainty, the amount required to open the road. The work will be highly important in a military point of view, as there is now no direct communication by land between Detroit and Mackinac.

I respectfully recommend that an appropriation of ten thousand dollars be asked for, to be applied, should the Secretary of War consider it advisable, to commence the work during the ensuing season.

I return the resolution, and

I am, sir, respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

TH. S. JESUP,  
Quartermaster General.

The Hon. LEWIS CASS,

*Secretary of War, Washington City.*

SIR: The commissioners appointed, by direction of the Secretary of War, to locate and survey the route for a military road from Fort Howard to Fort Crawford, via Fort Winnebago, have the honor to report that they have completed the duties assigned to them, and herewith transmit a map of the route selected.

Owing to the very limited knowledge of the country through which the route passes, a general examination has been necessary, especially between Fort Howard and Fort Winnebago. The little travelling has been blindly confined to the old Indian trails, which frequently lead, by very circuitous and unfavorable routes, from point to point, visiting in their course villages and other points out of the general course of the line.

With such imperfect knowledge, nothing could have been taken as granted; and it became necessary to give a personal examination to the several routes thought the most practicable.

After due consideration, the commissioners have not hesitated in giving the most decided preference to the route selected over all others named.

The other routes had under examination lie, for a considerable portion of their distance, on the left bank of the Fox river. The country generally is of a very inferior quality, and the labor and expense of opening the road would be much greater than on the route selected, owing to the marshy nature of the country through which it would pass. It is, moreover, still in possession of the Indian tribes, and will probably remain so for many years; and the numerous crossings of Fox river would, at certain seasons of the year, present serious obstacles.

On the other hand, the route by the head of the lake passes, in its whole extent, through lands of a very superior quality, soon to be in market, and

destined in a few years to be occupied by settlers ; the facility of construction is far greater than on either of the other routes, and the necessity of crossing the Fox entirely avoided.

Regarded in a military light, as the means of communication between three distant military posts, its superiority is manifest ; for it runs almost parallel to the natural boundary between the United States and the Menomonic and Winnebago tribes of Indians, entirely within lands possessed by the United States, with all the white settlements in its rear, and the country behind of such an open nature that communications can be established from either of the settlements to any point on the route.

The country upon the line admits of two general divisions : the wooded, extending from Green Bay to the head of lake Winnebago ; and the rolling prairie, extending from the latter point, with but few interruptions, to Fort Crawford.

Upon the first division, the labor of construction will be considerable ; where the road runs parallel to the river, it has been found necessary to locate it upon its bank, to avoid an almost continuous swamp, commencing generally a few hundred yards from its bank, and running parallel to it.

This has made it necessary that a number of ravines, which perform the offices of drains to the swamps behind, should be crossed, requiring more labor in construction than any other equal portion of the route.

From the point where the route leaves the river to the head of lake Winnebago, although quite heavily timbered, the ground is favorable, and more than half the labor on this portion has been already performed by the New York Indians, in opening a communication between their old settlements and the reservation to which they are shortly to remove.

On the second division, the labor and expense of construction is very small ; with the exception of some causeways in the vicinity of Fort Winnebago, the labor is limited to cutting and grubbing through the groves and belts of woods upon borders of streams ; the bridging is but trifling.

The commissioners would recommend that, upon the prairies, two parallel plough furrows be run, to indicate the direction and width of the road, as the crosses put up must soon be destroyed, as many of them have already been, through the mere wantonness of the Indians.

On the prairies, no other labor would be necessary than that of running the furrows ; and the woods are nearly all open and clear of underbrush ; and, by inspection of the map, it will be seen that a large proportion is prairie.

The prairie which is passed over at the distance of eighty-five miles from Green Bay, is, without doubt, the continuation of the high prairie ridge extending without interruption from the head of Lake Winnebago to the Mississippi, and would furnish a more direct and open communication between Fort Howard and the Mississippi, should it be thought unnecessary to pass by Fort Winnebago.

From Fort Winnebago to the Blue Mounds, a few obstructions exist, in the immediate neighborhood of Fort Winnebago ; but these form the only ones between that point and Fort Crawford.

At the Blue Mounds, distant about twelve miles from the Wisconsin, commences the elevated ridge extending uninterruptedly to within a few miles of the point where the line crosses the Wisconsin. This ridge is the most remarkable feature in the country : it varies from a few yards to several miles in width, and separates the waters of the Wisconsin from

those of the Platte, Grault, Peektano, and other tributaries of the Mississippi.

On either side of this ridge, the country is extremely broken, especially towards the Wisconsin, where it is only passable on the ridges that run from the prairie ridge to various points on the river. On the other side is the rolling prairie, extending throughout what is called the "mining country," and affording on its ridges, both towards the Mississippi and in other directions, good natural roads.

From this to Fort Crawford, as favorable ground has been chosen as the broken nature of the country will admit of.

It is thought that the present appropriation, with what has been estimated for, will be sufficient to finish the work on the plan proposed ; but it is supposed that, if a greater width than twenty feet was given to the road in the timbered land between Fort Howard and the head of lake Winnebago, much advantage would result, as the surface of the earth would be exposed to the action of the sun.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servants,

A. J. CENTER,

*2d Lt. 5th Inf. and Com'r.*

T. D. DOTY, *Commissioner.*